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Elwood D Garlock Sierra Club Member

Comments made by ~~Professor Peter Hansen~~ in the Engineering Department of the University of Iowa on Tuesday, April 15, 2003.

Today's EPA listening session is being held to gauge environmental issues important to the public from a senior citizen's perspective. I appreciate this opportunity to present the issues felt to be most important for the over 5,300 Sierra Club members here in the state of Iowa.

It's been said before that "your health is everything." Being healthy is one of the most important attributes one can have. Our health is affected by our environment from a time even prior to conception. Pollution in our air and water has been shown to affect the very cells that join when a life is created. In order to ensure that everyone can live a healthy life, we must then provide every individual with basic needs and eliminate that which causes these health problems. This means starting with clean air and clean water.

It wasn't so long ago that rivers started on fire and air pollution events that turned day into night killed people. This brought about our current programs to reduce the threats to our air and water. Over the last thirty years, Americans have been working to prevent air and water pollution through the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts – improving quality of life for all. And we have been for the most part, very successful. With modern technology, it's easier than ever to protect families from air pollution. In the last 30 years, the Clean Air Act has drastically improved pollution control technology and modern power plants now routinely achieve pollution reductions of more than 75%. So why is the Bush Administration now allowing polluting corporations to rewrite environmental laws, escape their responsibilities, and benefit at our expense?

To abandon the current path for one which avoids improvements to the air and water around us is foolhardy. We need to continue to bring improvements to our air and water because we know that asthma and cancer, as well as other environmentally-related diseases, are still shortening lives and threatening the health of young and old alike. America needs to continue to work to reduce this pollution. We know we have the ability. We know we have the technology. We know we have ingenuity to overcome any obstacles that may impede us. What we need is the political will to allow for these successes to continue.

Looking at life from the latter half, if we are to provide for healthy retirement years and reduced medical costs, we must provide for good health throughout one's life. On February 3 of this year, the Bush administration announced they were seeking to reduce the value of a life for those too young or too old to earn a paycheck. Instead of manipulating fuzzy math to make more pollution seem acceptable, the EPA should focus on protecting the health and safety of Americans of all ages by cleaning up our nation's dirtiest power plants and oil refineries. Therefore, the Sierra Club calls on the EPA and the Bush administration to ensure that we don't abandon the goals of the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. And to ensure everyone they can grow up in a world that doesn't value one life less than another.

